

AFTER 45 minutes of Saturday's Isthmian League encounter at Loakes Park, it seemed that Wycombe Wanderers, a goal down, were heading for another defeat. But in the second half Wanderers set Sutton back on their heels with some really incisive football.

It was Wanderers' sixth double of the season, having won 2-0 at Gander Green Lane in August. Yet after dominating the first 45 minutes territorially, it looked on the cards that Wycombe's inability to hit the target would cost them the points again.

Tony Horseman, though, had other ideas. His first goal was a beautifully taken effort on the volley and it gave Wycombe the tonic they so badly needed.

Although lacking weight and height, the Blues attack of Horseman, Pritchard and Hutchinson made up for their size with speed and agility.

In midfield a ball winner was needed due to the Pritchard move and this was provided by Rob Williams while Alan Gane put in his usual 100 per cent. But what completed the formula was the return of Delaney.

The Wanderers skipper has been struggling all season to reach his top form but on Saturday he came back from injury and overpowered the Sutton attack.

For much of the first half Wycombe were restricted to long range pot-shots at goal. The first real chance fell to Williams when Rundle cleverly tapped on a seventh minute corner. Williams fell to the ground in attempting to hook the ball home but ballooned it over the crossbar from six yards.

Pritchard had a 25 yarder saved by Thomas in the tenth minute but with the experienced John Mears bottling up the threat of Hutchinson, Wycombe's attack at this stage lacked penetration. The distribution from defence was fair but the forwards, with Horseman in particular, took a long time to get going.

In the 24th minute, dangerous striker Graham Dennis gave a sign of things to come with a brilliant run from the half way

Wycombe W. 3 Sutton U. 1 By STUART EARP

line. Leaving four defenders in his wake, he took the ball inside the penalty area but his parting shot was weak and Maskell was able to save comfortably.

Four minutes later Wanderers hit back again when Williams sent a rising drive fractionally over the top from 20 yards. But the occasional Sutton breakaway was always threatening. Mick Newman, running parallel with Derek Gamblin tried a lob but straight at Maskell and then in the 40th minute a boob by Ian Rundle gave Sutton the lead.

Under no real pressure, Rundle attempted a long pass back to his goalkeeper. His effort, however, was far too short and Dennis raced through, ran wide of Maskell and had time to select his spot before duly slotting home. Just before the interval Dennis almost made it 2-0 but Maskell got down well to save.

The eight minutes into the second half suggested that Sutton could well add another goal. But then Wycombe struck.

A free kick for a challenge on Horseman was awarded on the top side. Bullock floated over a long ball to Delaney who out-jumped the defence at the far post and placed the ball onto the waiting boot of Horseman. "Bodger" wasted no time in thumping it home, leaving Thomas stranded.

The goal provided the necessary tonic to the home side and to the crowd who urged on the players constantly. In the

58th minute they received their reward.

Sutton centre half Paul Webb handled the ball in a tussle with Horseman and referee Taylor, right on the spot, had no hesitation in awarding a penalty. The kick was given to Horseman instead of Delaney, the normal penalty taker, and Tony coolly sent Thomas the wrong way to go joint top scorer this season with 12 goals.

Eddy Webb went into the referee's book in the 60th minute for hand ball, Webb having got away with the same offence a minute earlier.

The match was sewn up in the 66th minute. Dave Bullock blocked a clearance from Jeff Evans and slipped the ball inside to Pritchard. The former Sutton man spotted a gap in the United defence and neatly put Birdseye through unmarked.

Several Wycombe forwards have been in a similar situation this season but missed the target. Birdseye, however, made no such mistake, curling the ball wide of Thomas and into the corner of the net.

After that, there was no stopping Wanderers. They began to find gaps that never existed in the first half, catching Sutton with lightning thrusts through the middle. Pritchard's pinpoint passing caught Sutton embarrassingly square at times and by the close, Sutton were left a well beaten outfit while Wycombe must have been greatly encouraged by their much improved performance.

WYCOMBE: J. Maskell, D. Gamblin, I. Rundle, J. Delaney, D. Bullock, R. Williams, P. Birdseye, A. Gane, A. Horseman, L. Pritchard, J. Hutchinson. Sub. M. Holifield (not used).

SUTTON: A. Thomas, J. Strong, J. Mears, E. Webb, P. Webb, R. Low, J. Evans, D. Butterfill, A. Varcoe, G. Dennis, M. Newman. Sub J. Ray (not used).

Referee: P. H. Taylor (Greenford).
Half time: 0-1. Goalscorers:
Sutton — Dennis (40), Wycombe
— Horseman 2 (53, 58 pen),
Birdseye (66).

Attendance: 1,004.